

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO

TEEN IDENTITY



Connecting Parents, Teens & Jesus
in a Disconnected World

AXIS PARENT GUIDES SERIES

A Parent's Guide to Teen FOMO

A Parent's Guide to Influencers

A Parent's Guide to Instagram

A Parent's Guide to TikTok

A Parent's Guide to YouTube

A Parent's Guide to Teen Identity

A Parent's Guide to LGBTQ+ & Your Teen

A Parent's Guide to Body Positivity

A Parent's Guide to Eating Disorders

A Parent's Guide to Fear & Worry

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO TEEN IDENTITY

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO

TEEN IDENTITY

axis



Tyndale House Publishers
Carol Stream, Illinois

Visit Tyndale online at tyndale.com.

Visit Axis online at axis.org.

Tyndale and Tyndale's quill logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Ministries.

A Parent's Guide to Teen Identity

Copyright © 2023 by Axis. All rights reserved.

Cover illustration by Lindsey Bergsma. Copyright © Tyndale House Ministries. All rights reserved.

Designed by Lindsey Bergsma

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*,[®] *NIV*.[®] Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.[®] Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked MSG are taken from *The Message*, copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers.

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version,[®] copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com, or call 1-855-277-9400.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-1-4964-6734-8

Printed in the United States of America

| | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 29 | 28 | 27 | 26 | 25 | 24 | 23 |
| 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

The secret of my identity is hidden
in the love and mercy of God. . . .

Therefore I cannot hope to find
myself anywhere except in Him. . . .

Therefore there is only one problem

on which all my existence, my
peace and my happiness depend: to
discover myself in discovering God.

If I find Him I will find myself and if

I find my true self I will find Him.

**THOMAS MERTON, *NEW SEEDS
OF CONTEMPLATION***

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| A Letter from Axis | x |
| Why Is Identity Such a Big Deal? | 1 |
| What Does Culture Say about Identity? | 7 |
| Where Does Gen Z Get Its Identity From? | 13 |
| Can These Things Give Gen Z a Real Sense of Self? | 23 |
| So Where Does Our Real Identity Come From? | 29 |
| Should We All Look the Same? | 37 |
| What Is the “False Self”? | 45 |

| | |
|--|----|
| What about Self-Knowledge? | 53 |
| What If My Teen Is Obsessed with How They Look? | 59 |
| How Can We Live Out Our Real Identities? | 65 |
| Final Thoughts | 75 |
| Recap | 80 |
| Personal Reflection Questions | 82 |
| Discussion Questions | 85 |
| Social Media Discussion Questions. | 88 |
| Additional Resources | 90 |
| Notes. | 93 |

A LETTER FROM AXIS

Dear Reader,

We're Axis, and since 2007, we've been creating resources to help connect parents, teens, and Jesus in a disconnected world. We're a group of gospel-minded researchers, speakers, and content creators, and we're excited to bring you the best of what we've learned about making meaningful connections with the teens in your life.

This parent's guide is designed to help start a conversation. Our goal is to give you enough knowledge that you're able to ask your teen informed questions about their world. For each guide, we spend weeks reading, researching, and interviewing parents and teens in order to distill everything you need to know about the topic at hand. We encourage you to read the whole thing and then to use the questions we include to get the conversation going with your teen—and then to follow the conversation wherever it leads.

As Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen point out in their book *Difficult Conversations*, “Changes in attitudes and behavior rarely come about because of arguments, facts, and attempts to persuade. How often do *you* change your values and beliefs—or whom you love or what you want in life—based on something someone tells you? And how likely are you to do so when the person who is trying to change you doesn’t seem fully aware of the reasons you see things differently in the first place?”¹ For whatever reason, when we believe that others are trying to understand *our* point of view, our defenses usually go down, and we’re more willing to listen to *their* point of view. The rising generation is no exception.

So we encourage you to ask questions, to listen, and then to share your heart with your teen. As we often say at Axis, discipleship happens where conversation happens.

Sincerely,
Your friends at Axis

¹ Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen, *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 137.

**WHY IS
IDENTITY SUCH
A BIG DEAL?**

IN THE HEART OF EVERY PERSON is a deep-rooted question: "Who am I, and how do I fit into the world around me?" In other words, what makes me "me"? Am I the roles that I play (friend, sibling, athlete)? Am I a set of characteristics (quiet, bubbly, confident)? Am I my thoughts, emotions, body, soul, actions . . . a summation of these things?

The question of identity shows up in which brands teens choose to wear, in how they manage their appearance with friends, in their desire to get good grades or try out for sports or musicals, and in what they think about themselves and others while scrolling through social media.¹

It can be difficult to navigate our teens' search for identity with healthy language, perspective, and grace. The Christian story for the world has a stunning message

AXIS

about who we are. Our challenge is to contextualize that story in the modern world, the world of popular culture.

The question of identity shows up in which brands teens choose to wear, in how they manage their appearance with friends, in their desire to get good grades or try out for sports or musicals, and in what they think about themselves and others while scrolling through social media.

